

THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
of
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
presents

EXPLORATIONS

Sunday, October 14, 1973 at 8:00 p.m.
Convocation Hall, Arts Building

FOUR IMPROMPTUS, OP. 90 (D.899) Franz Schubert
(1797 - 1828)
Allegro molto moderato (C minor)
Allegro (E flat major)
Andante (G flat major)
Allegretto (A flat major)
Helmut Brauss, piano

FRAUENLIEBE UND -LEBEN, OP. 42 Robert Schumann
(1810 - 1856)
(Woman's Life and Love)
Seit ich ihn gesehen
Er, der Herrlichste von Allen
Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben
Du Ring an meinem Finger
Helft mir, ihr Schwestern
Süsser Freund, du blickest
An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust
Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan
Merla Aikman, mezzo-soprano
Ernesto Lejano, piano

INTERMISSION

QUARTET, OP. 10 Claude Debussy
(1862 - 1918)
Animé et très décidé
Assez vif et bien rythmé
Andantino, doucement expressif
Très modéré: Très mouvement et avec passion
The University of Alberta String Quartet
Thomas Rolston and Lawrence Fisher, violins
Michael Bowie, viola; Claude Kenneson, violoncello

Next concert in this series: Sunday, November 18, at 8:00 p.m. - "Music by Composers at the U. of A."

COMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, October 24, at 8:30 p.m. in Convocation Hall - Edmonton Chamber Music Society presents the Cleveland Quartet. Members only.

Friday, October 26, at 8:00 p.m. in Convocation Hall - Claude Kenneson, violoncello, presents a recital. No admission charge.

PROGRAM NOTES

While Franz Schubert did compose twenty-two piano sonatas—the genre most basic in the piano literature of the Viennese (so-called) Classical composers—much of his music for solo piano is cast in the smaller genres favored by nineteenth-century composers. Both sets of the pieces Schubert called “impromptus” (Op. No.s. 90 and 142; Deutsch No.s. 899 and 935) were composed in 1827. They are thought to be related to earlier such works by the Czech composers Vorisek and Tomasek. Schubert’s songs are sometimes singled out as his greatest work; but the impromptus offer only one of many proofs that his special sensitivities were not dependent on a vocal medium. Beautifully shaped melodic lines; careful balance of timbre and sound colors; an extraordinary gift for expressive, albeit unorthodox harmonic inflection—all are present in characteristically Schubertian abundance. Unfortunately, like much other music of relatively modest outward pretensions, Schubert’s impromptus are often condemned to serve a didactic function, or else they become the subject of overdone pianistic histrionics. Fortunately, there are pianists who recognize the impromptus as among the ultimate tests of the player’s—and thereby musician’s—art.

The first piece of Op. 90 is based mostly on melodic figures derived from the opening, a dotted-rhythm upbeat followed by repeated tones. Schubert’s favorite device of shifting back and forth from major to minor modes of the same key centre becomes especially obvious near the end of the piece, which concludes in a firm C major bringing to rest the plaintiveness of earlier passages. No. 2 follows a scheme of a different order, beginning with airy perpetual motion passagework in the major mode, abruptly halted by a strongly contrasting episode in a distant minor key. Rather than ending with only a restatement of the opening passagework, Schubert closes the piece on a dark note by a return of sternly assertive episode material. No. 3, with its long-breathed melody over gently rippling accompaniment figures, is the kind of music that has earned Schubert the epithet of “musician’s musician.” The fourth impromptu of the set resembles the second in its lightly running passagework—a type of playing in which the otherwise not especially virtuosic Schubert excelled. The piece is in fact a scherzo and trio, the trio being analogous to the contrasting episode heard in No. 2. However, even in the outer scherzo sections, Schubert gives us, in addition to the fluttering material first heard, a soaring melody that makes of the piano truly a singing instrument.

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The songs of Schumann’s **Frauenliebe und -Leben** are among more than a hundred he composed in 1840, the year of his marriage to Clara Wieck. This phenomenal outpouring of song is one of the most remarkable and least disputable instances of a direct relationship between the personal and creative life of a composer; and it is particularly appropriate to a man like Schumann, for whom much music was inextricably bound up with literary associations. Even before the clichés of certain recent social trends became imbedded in the consciousness of audiences, Chamisso’s text was recognized as naive overstatement. It would be paltry, if not hypocritical, to reject the songs’ texts while accepting the music, because both together do reflect the absolute devotion felt by Robert and Clara toward each other. Nevertheless, Schumann’s music, considerably more artful than is Chamisso’s poetry, often belies the unabashed ardor of the words. A lover’s thoughts, even in the most honest or eloquent of people, must be more complex than stated words. The principle of multiple levels of meaning might be extended also to Schumann’s use of certain melodic motives supposed (here and in other compositions) to be symbolic of the beloved Clara, or simply of particularly exuberant feeling. In addition, the piano, though literally a speechless instrument, is at least on a par with the singer in expressing the meaning of the songs, not only in the postlude commentaries at the end of every song, but also in more immediate kinds of musical dialogue with the singer.

As a cycle, **Frauenliebe und -Leben** does not present a continuous narrative, but rather a series of character sketches drawn from various points in the ripening of the young woman’s love: the awakening of love (No. 1); boundless admiration for the physical and spiritual being of the beloved (No. 2); the joyful realization that the love is mutual and that it will be forever (No.s. 3 and 4); the wedding festivities and slightly poignant farewell to her old life (No. 5); the confession of still deeper love for the man (No. 6) and for their child as his image (No. 7); and grief at the loss of the beloved (No. 8). The starkness of the last song is tempered at the closing by the beautiful recollection of the first love, in a piano postlude that is a shortened statement of the first song. Chamisso’s poems included a ninth one not set by Schumann, in which final consolation is found in the thought of continuing generations. Schumann also changed the textual reference in the last line of No. 8, from Chamisso’s resigned “past happiness” to a more painful “lost happiness.” For the still-young widow, as perhaps for the young Schumann, nothing but the memory of the first love can ever compensate for the love itself.

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Debussy’s String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10, is his only work in that genre. Composed in 1893, it dates from a time when Debussy’s musical thought was subject to various influences. The sounds of the Asian and Near Eastern music Debussy heard at the Paris Exposition of 1889 may be related to the ornamental or eccentric melodic patterns, ostinato repetitions, and insistent ensemble pizzicato of the second movement. Debussy’s affinities with Borodin and other Russian composers could be associated with his frequent use of modal harmonies and the generally colorful treatment even of an ensemble as homogeneous as the string quartet. A certain sweetness yet transparency may be partially ascribed to the influence of Massenet and Grieg, two more composers who left their mark on the highly individual Debussy.

Although his temperament and whole creative approach differ radically from those of César Franck (for a brief time one of Debussy’s mentors), the cyclical relationship of thematic material through all four movements of this quartet is analogous to Franck’s compositional techniques. The idea of mutating or transforming a single theme throughout several movements while still preserving certain audible general relationships of contour or rhythm is in some ways a continuation of traditional classical methods of musical development. Such procedures were for the most part antithetical to Debussy’s genius, but (whether purposely or not) he has employed them wholesale in constructing his string quartet—this ensemble being more strongly associated than is any other with the classical tradition in music.

Although Debussy’s quartet was a deliberate attempt to work within the limits of a traditional medium, critics at first found the work “strange and bizarre.” Indeed, Debussy promised his friend Chausson that he would write another quartet invested with more “dignity of form.” He apparently had more important directions in which to move. The somewhat Germanic formal structure of the quartet finds fewer parallels in later Debussy works than do its more original or particularly French aspects. Even the most **espressivo** passages of the quartet have already that languorous, somewhat detached quality sometimes considered a hallmark of Debussy. If one allows himself the dangerous luxury of aesthetic generalization, the quartet could be taken as representative of what composer Virgil Thomson described as “. . . the classic ideal that is every Frenchman’s dream of every foreigner’s dream of France. It is the dream of an equilibrium in which sentiment, sensuality and the intelligence are united at their highest intensity.”

—W. K.

1

Seit ich ihn gesehen

Seit ich ihn gesehen,
Glaub' ich blind zu sein,
Wo ich hin nur blicke,
Seh' ich ihn allein;
Wie im wachen Traume
Schwebt sein Bild mir vor,
Taucht aus tiefstem Dunkel
Heller nur empor.

Sonst ist licht- und farblos
Alles um mich her,
Nach der Schwestern Spiele
Nicht begehrt' ich mehr,
Möchte lieber weinen
Still im Kämmerlein;
Seit ich ihn gesehen,
Glaub' ich blind zu sein.

Since first I saw him

Since first I saw him I have been
blind to all else. I see him only,
wherever I go; by day in vision, by
night in a dream made brighter still
by the darkness.

All else is dark and grey; I have no
heart for my sisters' games, I would
rather sit and weep all alone in my
room, blind to all else since I first
saw him.

11

Er, der Herrlichste von Allen

Er, der Herrlichste von Allen,
Wie so milde, wie so gut!
Holde Lippen, klares Auge,
Heller Sinn und fester Mut.
So wie dort in blauer Tiefe
Hell und herrlich jener Stern,
Also er an meinem Himmel
Hell und herrlich, hehr und fern.

Wandle, wandle deine Bahnen,
Nur betrachten deinen Schein,
Nur in Demut ihn betrachten,
Selig nur und traurig sein!
Höre nicht mein stilles Beten,
Deinem Glücke nur geweiht;
Darfst mich niedre Magd, nicht kennen,
Hoher Stern der Herrlichkeit!

Nur die Würdigste von Allen
Darf beglücken deine Wahl,
Und ich will die Hohe segnen
Viele tausendmal!
Will mich freuen dann und weinen,
Selig, selig bin ich dann;
Sollte mir das Herz auch brechen,
Brich, o Herz! Was liegt daran?

He is the finest of all men

He is the finest of all men; how gen-
tle and loving he is; sweet lip, bright
eye, clear head, true heart. As stars
shine in the blue depths of the sky, so
he is a star in my sky, bright and glo-
rious, high and far.

Go on your way, just let me gaze on
your brightness; humbly to think of
that is all my sorrow and all my joy.
Heed not my silent prayer said for
your happiness; you must not know so
lowly a maid as I am, you high and
bright star.

Only the finest of all women is worthy
of your choice; and she shall have my
thousandfold blessing. And I shall be
glad and joyful, joyful, though I weep;
what matter if my heart should break?

111

Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben

Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben,
Es hat ein Traum mich berückt;
Wie hätte er doch unter Allen
Mich Arme erhöht und beglückt?

I cannot fathom it

I cannot fathom it, cannot believe it;
I must be dreaming. How, from among
all women, could he possibly have cho-
sen to honour and bless me?

Mir war's, er habe gesprochen:
'Ich bin auf ewig dein.'
Mir war's—ich träume noch immer,
Es kann ja nimmer so sein!

O lass im Traume mich sterben,
Geweiget an seiner Brust,
Den seligen Tod mich schlürfen
In Träumen unendlicher Lust.

I thought I heard him say 'I am yours
for ever', but I must still be dreaming,
it cannot be true.

Oh, let me die in this dream, cradled in
his arms; what bliss so to die, in tears
of endless joy.

IV

Du Ring an meinem Finger

Du Ring an meinem Finger,
Mein goldenes Ringelein,
Ich drücke dich fromm an die Lippen,
Dich fromm an das Herze mein.

Ich hatt' ihn ausgeträumet,
Der Kindheit friedlich schönen Traum,
Ich fand allein mich verloren
Im Eden, unendlichen Raum.
Du Ring an meinem Finger,
Da hast du mich erst belehrt,
Hast meinem Blick erschlossen
Des Lebens unendlichen, tiefen Wert.

Ich will ihm dienen, ihm leben,
Ihm angehören ganz,
Hin selber mich geben, und finden
Verklärt mich in seinem Glanz.

Ring on my finger

Ring on my finger, dear golden ring,
I press you devoutly to my lips, to
my heart.

I woke from the peaceful dream of childhood
and found myself alone in the wide world.
But you, ring on my finger, have opened
my eyes to the real truth of life.

I shall live to serve him, to be his alone,
surrender myself and become transfigured
in the light of his love.

V

Helft mir, ihr Schwestern

Helft mir, ihr Schwestern,
Freundlich mich schmücken,
Dient der Glücklichen heute, mir,
Windet geschäftig
Mir um die Stirne
Noch der blühenden Myrte Zier!

Als ich befriedigt,
Freudigen Herzens,
Sonst dem Geliebten im Arme lag,
Immer noch rief er,
Sehnsucht im Herzen,
Ungeduldig den heutigen Tag.

Helft mir, ihr Schwestern,
Helft mir verscheuchen
Eine törichte Bangigkeit,
Dass ich mit klarem
Aug' ihn empfange,
Ihn, die Quelle der Freudigkeit.

Bist, mein Geliebter,
Du mir erschienen,
Gibst du mir, Sonne, deinen Schein,

Help me, my sisters

Help me, my sisters, with my bridal wreath,
tend me on this my happiest of days; twine
the myrtle blossom about my brow.

When I lay happily in my loved one's arms
he would always tell me how impatiently
he longed for the dawn of our wedding-
day.

Help me, dear sisters, help me to dispel
my foolish fears; let me receive him, the
source of all my joy, with undimmed eyes.

And are you here, my love? Sun, do you
shine? Let me bow to my lord in all
reverence and humility.

Lass mich in Andacht,
Lass mich in Demut,
Lass mich verniegen dem Herren mein!

Streuet ihm, Schwestern,
Streuet ihm Blumen,
Bringet ihm knospende Rosen dar.
Aber euch Schwestern
Grüß' ich mit Wehmut,
Freudig scheidend aus eurer Schaar!

Spread flowers for him, sisters, offer
him rosebuds. But to you, my sisters,
I bid a sad farewell, though I leave
you with joy.

VI

Süsser Freund, du blickest

Süsser Freund, du blickest
Mich verwundert an,
Kannst es nicht begreifen,
Wie ich weinen kann;
Lass der feuchten Perlen
Ungewohnte Zier
Freudig hell erzittern
In dem Auge mir.

Wie so bang mein Busen.
Wie so wonnevoll,
Wilst' ich nur mit Worten,
Wie ich's sagen soll;
Komm und birg dein Antlitz
Hier an meiner Brust,
Will ins Ohr dir flüstern
Alle meine Lust.

Weisst du nun die Tränen,
Die ich weinen kann,
Sollst du nicht sie sehen,
Du geliebter Mann?

Bleib' an meinem Herzen,
Fühle dessen Schlag,
Dass ich fest und fester
Nur dich drücken mag!

Hier an meinem Bette
Hat die Wiege Raum,
Wo sie still verberge
Meinen holden Traum;
Kommen wird der Morgen,
Wo der Traum erwacht,
Und daraus dein Bildnis
Mir entgegen lacht!

Dear friend, you look at me in surprise

Dear friend, you look at me in surprise,
you cannot understand why I weep. Let
the unaccustomed glory of wet pearls
quiver in my eyes, for they shine with
joy.

How anxious my heart feels, yet how bliss-
ful; if only I knew how to say it in words
Come and hide your face here on my breast,
let me whisper all my joy.

Now do you know why I am crying? should
you not see my tears, my beloved husband?

Stay by my heart, feel how it beats; let
me hold you close, closer.

Here by my bedside there is room for a
cradle, silently hiding my blissful
dream; and one morning the dream will
wake and look at me laughing with your
likeness. Your likeness!

VII

An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust

An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust,
Du meine Wonne, du meine Lust,
Das Glück ist die Liebe, die Lieb'
ist das Glück,
Ich hab's gesagt, und nehm's nicht zurück.

On my heart, at my breast

On my heart, at my breast, my child, my
joy. Happiness is love, love is happi-
ness; so I have always said and so I
say still.

Hab' überschwenglich mich geschüttelt,
Bin überglücklich aber jetzt;
Nur die da säugt, nur die da liebt
Das Kind, dem sie die Nahrung gibt,
Nur eine Mutter weiss allein,
Was lieben heisst und glücklich sein.
O wie bedaur' ich doch den Mann,
Der Mutterglück nicht fühlen kann.

Du lieber, lieber Engel du,
Du schauest mich an und lächelst dazu!
An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust,
Du meine Wonne, du meine Lust!

I once thought myself boundlessly
happy, but now I truly am. Only
a woman loving the child at her
breast, only a mother can know the
real meaning of love and happiness.
How I pity a man, who cannot know
the joy a mother has.

You dear angel, looking at me and
laughing: come to my heart, my
breast, my child, my joy.

VIII

Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan

Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan,
Der aber traf:
Du schlüfst, du harter unbarmhertz'ger
Mann,
Den Todesschlaf.

Es blicket die Verlassne vor sich hin,
Die Welt ist leer;
Geliebet hab' ich und gelebt, ich bin
Nicht lebend mehr.
Ich zieh' mich in mein Innres still zurück,
Der Schleier fällt;
Da hab' ich dich und mein verlornes Glück,
Du meine Welt!

Now for the first time you have hurt me

Now for the first time you have hurt
me, but this hurt is grievous; hard,
pitiless man, you are sleeping the
sleep of death.

Left all alone, I survey an empty
world. I have lived and loved, and
now my life is done. I withdraw si-
lently into my inmost soul; the veil
falls. There I have you and my lost
happiness, you my whole world!

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